

My passion for improving the quality of care for my patients and helping them achieve independence is what brought me here to Congress.

Last year, I was proud to turn my experience into advocacy by guiding the Special Needs Trust Fairness Act through the legislative process. This commonsense bill empowered those living with disabilities to set up their own special needs trusts, an action which was barred by previous law. After receiving overwhelming bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, language from the bill was included in the 21st Century Cures Act, which was signed into law on December 13, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, safeguarding the rights of Americans living with disabilities is a cause I am honored to fight for, and I look forward to continuing my efforts.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DR. HOWARD KIRTLAND

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a member of the medical community whom we recently lost.

Today, I honor the life and memory of Dr. Howard Kirtland, who passed away last week after years of selfless service to his community and employees through his practice, Venango Hematology and Oncology, as well as the Kirtland Cancer Foundation.

Dr. Kirtland was well-known for his kindness and generosity throughout the community. Those closest to him will be deeply impacted by the loss of a man who was loved for his mentorship, selflessness, and incredible work ethic.

Dr. Kirtland founded the Kirtland Cancer Foundation with his personal resources to financially assist cancer patients and their families, as well as providing scholarship money to students affected by the disease.

Dr. Kirtland was born in San Antonio, Texas, and raised in Poughkeepsie, New York. During his residency at the University of Virginia, he left school to enlist in the Army. He served in Vietnam before moving to Franklin, Pennsylvania, in the Pennsylvania Fifth Congressional District, to start his practice.

On behalf of the people of Pennsylvania, I recognize and honor Dr. Kirtland for his incredible life of service to those around him. He will be greatly missed.

BORDER SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. McCLINTOCK). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, as an FBI agent, my job was to keep the American people safe from all enemies, both foreign and domestic.

On the national security front, those components include a sound counterterrorism strategy, a sound counterintelligence strategy, a sound cybersecurity strategy, a sound foreign policy, and a sound border security strategy.

Before us today, Mr. Speaker, is the issue of border security, an issue that,

quite frankly, has been largely ignored over the past several decades by both parties. As a result, our national security remains compromised at a point in time where we live in a more dangerous world now than we ever have.

When you combine the fact that our enemies are now both more sophisticated and better funded, coupled with our border security apparatus which is underfunded, outdated, and compromised, this is a recipe for disaster for our Nation. The time is now to act on securing our border: north, south, east, and west—all of its components in all of our geographic regions.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I have spent time on the border with our brave women and men on the front lines, working with CPB officers and Border Patrol agents. I have spent time both on the ocean and in the sky with brave women and men in our Coast Guard. Mr. Speaker, they are pleading for our help, and shame on us if we do not deliver for them.

Their requests are simple: increase their manpower to provide them with a sufficient number of agents to interdict not just drugs and guns from cartels, but also criminals and terrorists who seek to do us harm; invest in the technology that they need to do their jobs, to include drones and aerial surveillance, infrared technology, heat sensors, motion detectors both above and below the ground, and an array of 21st century, high-tech options that serve as force multipliers along the border.

They need physical barriers in various forms along various stretches of the border in order to slow down the cartels and allow for sufficient response time for the agents to interdict. Moreover, we must invest heavily in a robust human intelligence program, giving our agents the resources they need to recruit human sources on the other side of the border to provide our agents with the advance notice of both the sources and the methods of criminal conspiracies that are forming along the border.

In addition, we must bolster the Office of Inspector General to crack down on border corruption through the use of drug testing, financial screening, and polygraph examinations.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of border security is a multipronged challenge that requires action on all fronts, not just one or two, and I urge my friends and colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Please do not politicize this issue.

Securing operational control of our border is a national security emergency. My former law enforcement colleagues who are putting their life on the line every day while protecting our borders are asking for our help. Let us not let them down.

THE TAYLOR FORCE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania). The Chair

recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CURBELO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1164, the Taylor Force Act. This legislation conditions financial assistance from the United States on the Palestinian Authority's termination of support for terror committed by individuals under its jurisdictional control. In order for the Palestinian Authority to receive aid, it would also be required to condemn acts of terror and cease providing payments to those who have committed such acts.

The bill is named after Taylor Force, a former U.S. Army officer who was stabbed to death during a terrorist attack in Tel Aviv.

This legislation is a commonsense solution that we must address. The Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, has continued to support efforts that undermine attempts at peace between the Palestinians and our great ally Israel.

The blatant encouragement of terrorist activity by the Palestinian Authority must end. Why should we be rewarding this kind of behavior?

The Palestinian Authority perpetuates terrorism by paying salaries to terrorists who are in prison. To make matters worse, those salaries increase the longer they are in jail, thus encouraging these terrorists to commit more violent acts.

This is unacceptable. The United States must do something to end this conduct because the reality is it is costing innocent lives. I believe the goals of H.R. 1164, the Taylor Force Act, are a step in the right direction, and I urge my colleagues to join me in calling for its consideration and passage in the House.

LOW INCOME HOUSING

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw much-needed attention to our Nation's rental affordability crisis, from rural America to the suburbs, to the big cities, this problem grows in severity each day, limiting Americans' abilities to provide quality food, medical care, and safety for their families.

My home State of Florida has been particularly hard-hit, ranking third among States with the greatest number of severely cost-burdened renters. In my district, the Florida Keys continue to face an affordable housing crisis that has made it difficult for the workers and entrepreneurs of its ever-growing economy.

That is why, earlier this year, I attended the opening of the first-ever affordable housing project for low-income seniors outside of Key West. I have also been working to ensure Naval Air Station Key West, which currently has 166 units on base that have sat vacant for several years, is put to better use. While the process is slow, I am grateful for the Navy's assistance as we work to explore the possibility of opening these units for more affordable housing in the Keys.

Mr. Speaker, finding solutions to making housing more affordable for our constituents, especially the most vulnerable, is a priority of mine here in Congress. I am proud to stand with Mr. TIBERI of Ohio and over 70 bipartisan Members to support his efforts to reform and strengthen low-income housing tax credits. It is time for Congress to work towards responsible solutions and make the rental affordability crisis a priority.

PASSAGE OF SANCTIONS PACKAGE

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the passage of sanctions against the Iranian, Russian, and North Korean regimes. This package of sanctions sends a strong message to these regimes that the United States will not tolerate their rogue actions.

These sanctions will hold accountable those involved in the Iranian regime's ballistic missile program, those who attempt to destabilize the region and threaten Israel, as well as those responsible for Iran's ongoing human rights abuses. The legislation also sets us on a path to deter conventional Iranian activities in the region and imposes sanctions on any individual that contributes to Iran's ballistic missiles or to terrorism.

The sanctions against North Korea will respond to its increasingly hostile threats against the United States and our allies in Asia. By increasing the President's authority to impose sanctions on persons in violation of United National Security Council resolutions regarding North Korea, we are ensuring action can be taken swiftly when necessary.

Last, but certainly not least, we have strengthened sanctions against Russia in response to cyber attacks and interference in Ukraine. Specifically, we are increasing sanctions on human rights abusers, those who supply weapons to the Assad regime in Syria, and those conducting cyber activity on behalf of the Russian Government.

Given the seriousness of Russia's aggression, we are strengthening the existing sanctions contained in executive orders on Russia and mandating a congressional review if any sanctions are relaxed, suspended, or terminated. I strongly encourage the President to sign this bill into law and will continue to impress upon all of my colleagues the need to not treat Russia lightly.

These threats posed to our national security by Iran, Russia, and North Korea cannot be understated. With passage of this sanctions package, Congress is doing its job to ensure they will be held accountable.

SALUTING THE FIREFIGHTERS
AND AGENCIES OF CAL FIRE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saluting the more

than 5,000 firefighters from 40 cooperating agencies that assembled under the coordination of CAL FIRE to battle the Detwiler fire that threatened Yosemite Valley and its gateway communities.

I spent Saturday at the command centers in Mariposa and Merced Counties, and what I said is what I have seen time and again at so many fires we are having these days in the Sierras: cool, calm professionalism; selflessness; and devotion to duty.

□ 1115

CAL FIRE is an agency that works. I want particularly to salute and thank Nancy Koerperich, CAL FIRE's unit fire chief for Madera, Merced, and Mariposa. She and her operation literally saved several towns, including Mariposa and Coulterville, from annihilation last week.

Sheriff Doug Binnewies of Mariposa County is rightly being hailed for his courage and leadership in directing the orderly evacuation of the town of Mariposa as the fire bore down upon it.

You can literally see how the fire burned right up to the town's edge. I can't tell you how many homes I saw where firefighters stopped it literally within a few feet of their front doors. CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Jeremy Rahn told me that the difference between saving and losing so many homes was defensible space.

CAL FIRE has produced a superb phone app to assist homeowners in preparing their homes so that if, God forbid, the need arises, firefighters will be able to defend them. It also provides fire alerts, and anyone in the mountain community should have it. It is free for downloading at your phone's app store.

I cannot say enough about the firefighters who have been working in triple-digit heat on 24-hour shifts to battle the flames or the air crews that dropped a staggering 500,000 gallons of fire retardant in a single day at the height of the conflagration. Their effectiveness can be seen by red borders of fire retardant that separate the blackened ground of the fire on one side from the landscape they saved on the other.

They not only saved these communities and hundreds of homes, they also stopped the fire within just a few miles of the Stanislaus National Forest, a forest that is dying because of Federal environmental restrictions on forest management. The firefighters warned that, if the fire had reached these vast stands of dead trees, the fire would have exploded with atomic force. And that is the fine point of the matter.

I spoke with Mariposa County Supervisor Marshall Long and many of the other firefighters at the Mariposa command center, and the one thing that they stressed time and again is that they need relief from the regulations that are making it almost impossible to create firebreaks, thin the forests, or remove the excess fuels.

These policies, imposed 45 years ago through legislation like the National

Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act, promised to improve the forest environment. After 45 years of experience with these laws, I think we are entitled to ask: Well, how is the forest environment doing? The answer is damning. These laws have made it virtually impossible to keep our forests properly managed, and the result has been severe tree overcrowding.

The Sierra Nevada normally support between 20 and 100 trees per acre, depending upon the topography. The average tree density is now 266 trees per acre. This extreme overcrowding has stressed the trees to the point they can no longer resist drought and beetle infestation and disease. This has caused a massive tree die-off, and we have entire national forests now just waiting to explode with over 100 million dead trees.

The heroic firefighters of the Detwiler fire have kept it out of these hazard zones, but the hazard zones are still there. And consider this: we are only at the very beginning of the fire season that combines fresh brush from last year's rains with millions of dead trees that were too stressed from overcrowding to survive the drought. The firefighters I spoke with on Saturday bitterly complained that they can't even cut firebreaks to isolate these zones because of the same so-called environmental laws.

The House has pending before it the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2017 that would allow us to restore good forest management, but we may already have run afoul of what Churchill called history's "terrible, chilling words: too late."

Mr. Speaker, I call for expeditious consideration of the Resilient Federal Forests Act and other legislation aimed at restoring management to our forests in the hope that firefighters can hold these fires at bay until we restore good management to our public lands.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CURBELO of Florida). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 19 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Reverend William D. Johnson, Jr., Harbour Lake Baptist Church, Goose Creek, South Carolina, offered the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for the day that You have bestowed upon us. May our actions glorify You